

Dan Ruben, Executive Director  
Equal Justice America  
13540 East Boundary Road  
Building II, Suite 204  
Midlothian, VA 23112

Dear Mr. Ruben,

I want to thank you and the Equal Justice America Fellowship Program for the incredible opportunity to intern at a nonprofit organization this summer that provides direct legal services to a community I feel passionate about representing. I was able to work at the Legal Assistance Foundation (LAF) in their Children and Family Practice Group, specifically on the Education Law Project, because of the funding I received from Equal Justice America. The Education Law Project represents wards of the state in special education and school discipline cases. With a background in Education, as a former teacher through Teach for America, I could not have imagined a better way to combine my passions for both poverty law and educational equity.

From the very start of my internship, I had the opportunity to see the day-to-day tasks of an Education public interest attorney. For example, on my second day at LAF I was invited to attend IEP meetings with LAF attorneys and witness how the attorneys zealously advocate for appropriate special education services on behalf of their clients. In addition to participating in the IEP process, I was able to conduct legal research, draft a due process complaint, write memorandums for inclusion in attorney's cases, and review student records to determine next steps with respects to our representation.

I believe that my knowledge as an educator and my Masters in Education served me well as an intern on the Project as I was able to bring my prior experience into my internship. One attorney on the project brought me to an IEP meeting so that I could provide my unique perspective to how the school was providing supports for one of our client's that was having a difficult time completing homework at a proficient level. I was able to analyze the supports the school put in place, evaluate their assessment data, and provide my recommendations for how to support her homework completion and mastery. Having a background in Education into addition to my 1L curriculum allowed me to provide valuable perspectives to the team given my roles as an educator in addition to a legal point of view.

I had the opportunity to work on cases for 10 different clients within the Education project. One case that I enjoyed working on was for a client whose caseworker inappropriately provided her school with her confidential child welfare file. My job was to research statutes and case law and write a memorandum regarding how to challenge her permanent record. I found statutes for both amending and destroying confidential files in a permanent record to include in our complaint. After researching the district's unique procedures for requesting an amendment I was able to incorporate my research and the district's protocols into a complaint to amend her permanent record on behalf of our client.

Another case I enjoyed working on was writing a due process complaint on behalf of a client who had his IEP eligibility meeting delayed for almost a year due to staffing issues within his

school district. Drafting the due process complaint was a great experience as I was able to witness how legal drafting, research, and advocacy can ensure that our client's procedural rights within the special education system were sufficiently represented.

As an intern at LAF, I also had the opportunity to improve upon my client interaction skills. I had multiple phone calls with my client's caseworkers to check up on how my clients were doing in their foster care placements, and discuss next steps for their cases. I also had the opportunity to collaborate with the foster parents and assure them that LAF was working diligently to advocate on behalf of their child's educational interests.

Mr. Ruben, thank you again for providing the support and resources that allowed me to work at LAF this summer. I had an incredible experience working on the Education Law project. LAF has asked me to return next year to continue working on these cases and I hope to have the opportunity to maintain my relationship with this organization throughout my law school career.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Gabriella Libin". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the word "Sincerely,".

Gabriella Libin  
Juris Doctor Candidate 2018  
The University of Chicago Law School

August 31, 2016

Dan Ruben  
Executive Director  
Equal Justice America  
13540 East Boundary Road,  
Building II, Suite 204  
Midlothian, VA 23112

Re: Gabriella Libin summer fellowship evaluation

Dear Mr. Ruben:

I am pleased to write to you to evaluate Gabriella Libin's fellowship with LAF in 2016. It was a pleasure to have her with us this summer.

During her time with us Gabriella engaged in a wide variety of legal tasks related to education law. She contacted school records custodians to obtain missing student records and abstracted them by creating documents listing special education, behavioral, and academic data. For clients likely in need of special education, Gabriella analyzed the records and drafted requests for special education evaluations to school districts. Gabriella also spent time this summer contacting foster parents, caseworkers, and evaluators to coordinate independent student evaluations before the school year.

Gabriella spent significant time this summer conducting legal research for a case in which a child welfare caseworker improperly disclosed a student's confidential records to the student's school. She researched confidentiality provisions under the Illinois Juvenile Court Act, Illinois School Student Records Act and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act. She found additional statutes we incorporated into our complaint, including one relating to the destruction of school records under special education laws. She drafted a memo on the administrative process to challenge the improper inclusion of the records, suggesting an argument we could use to persuade the school district to amend the records.

Gabriella also developed her drafting skills this summer. She drafted a detailed special education due process hearing request for a student whose school district failed to evaluate him within mandated timelines. She spent significant time contacting the caseworker and foster parent, and gathering information from the student's former schools. She conducted research on compensatory education claims under special education laws, early childhood education, and the effect a parent's unilateral efforts to educate their child has on compensatory education claims. She also drafted a formal mediation request and a letter to a school district demanding that an individualized education plan's factual inaccuracies be amended or removed.

Dan Ruben  
August 31, 2016  
Page Two

I personally enjoyed working with Gabriella. In particular, she critically analyzed several hundred pages of special education records for a high school student who is still unable to read. I found her insights extremely valuable and her work of high quality. She was reliable and enthusiastic. Last, but not least, she always treated our clients with respect and empathy.

I will only be too happy to answer any particular questions you may have.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "S. L. Pick". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "S." and last name "Pick" clearly distinguishable.

Steven L. Pick  
Senior Attorney  
312-347-8301 (voice)  
773-814-0342 (mobile)  
312-612-1401 (direct fax)  
[spick@lafchicago.org](mailto:spick@lafchicago.org)